CollegeBoard

Frequently Asked Questions: Environmental Context Dashboard

What is the Environmental Context Dashboard?

The Environmental Context Dashboard (ECD) is a new admissions tool currently being piloted. It allows colleges to incorporate context into their admissions process in a data-driven, consistent way. The dashboard includes:

- **SAT scores in context**: Students' SAT® scores can be seen within the context of the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile of SAT scores from their high school.

- **Information on the high school:** Including senior class size; percentage of students who meet federal eligibility criteria for free and reduced-price lunch; rurality/urbanicity; and average first-year SAT score of colleges students from that high school attend, the percentage of seniors taking an AP® Exam, average number of AP Exams taken, average AP score from that high school, and the number of unique AP Exams administered at that high school

- **Contextual data on the neighborhood and high school environment:** The context data includes two measures—neighborhood and high school environment—calculated using data drawn from a combination of publicly available sources (e.g., NCES and U.S. Census Bureau), and aggregated College Board data.

What data is included in the dashboard?

Some media reports have referred to the ECD providing an "adversity score." That term is inaccurate, because that's not what the dashboard does. To clarify:

- The Environmental Context Dashboard **doesn't** alter a student's SAT score in any way.

- It **does** show how a student's SAT or ACT® score compares to those of other students in their school.

- It **doesn't** take into account any personal characteristics of a student beyond the test score.

- It **does** provide admissions officers with better context about an applicant's neighborhood and high school.

The dashboard draws from public data sources, including census data and NCES data, as well as College Board data, and presents an aggregate view of high school and neighborhood context for an applicant.

Why was the dashboard created?

The dashboard was developed in partnership with our member colleges who were looking for innovative ways to consistently and systematically review applicants in context. The dashboard shines a light on students who have demonstrated resourcefulness to overcome challenges and achieve more with less.

How are colleges using the dashboard? What is the value they see in this tool?

Colleges piloting the dashboard view the information in the dashboard alongside a student's application. The information is not intended to replace existing information about students, their schools, or their neighborhoods. We regularly refresh the data underlying the dashboard so it's as up to date as possible. Colleges decide whether to use the information in the dashboard as part of their holistic admissions process.

The dashboard allows admissions officers to see all students' strengths relative to where they live and learn, in a new, consistent, data-driven way. Because admissions officers are often very familiar with certain high schools and much less familiar with others, the dashboard helps find talented students who have up until now been unseen. The dashboard is intended to augment professional knowledge and experience of college admissions officers.

Over 90% of pilot participants reported that the tool made it easier to incorporate contextual information about students and provided a more comprehensive view of the applicant.

Where in the development cycle is the dashboard?

The College Board has been working closely with member colleges over the last three years to develop the dashboard, conducting research and pilots and refining the tool based on feedback. In 2018-19 we piloted the dashboard with more than 50 colleges and universities

In addition, we have shared information and received input from counselors and K−12 member leaders, including the Board of Trustees, national and regional councils, and the counselor community advisory group. We also presented information about the ECD at College Board Forum and regional forums.

This summer we will incorporate feedback from colleges to improve the tool and offer webinars and information sessions for K−12 leaders and counselors.

This fall we plan to expand the pilot to include more than 150 colleges. We will continue to gather feedback from K−12 and higher education members throughout the pilot and we will continue to improve the tool and consider use and access beyond higher education.

Next year, we plan to make it broadly available to colleges and universities for free.

Will students and high schools have access to information on the dashboard?

The tool is currently being piloted for use by admissions officers. As we continue to refine the tool and move from the pilot to a broader rollout, we will work closely with our K−12 members to consider how we might make the information in the tool more broadly available.
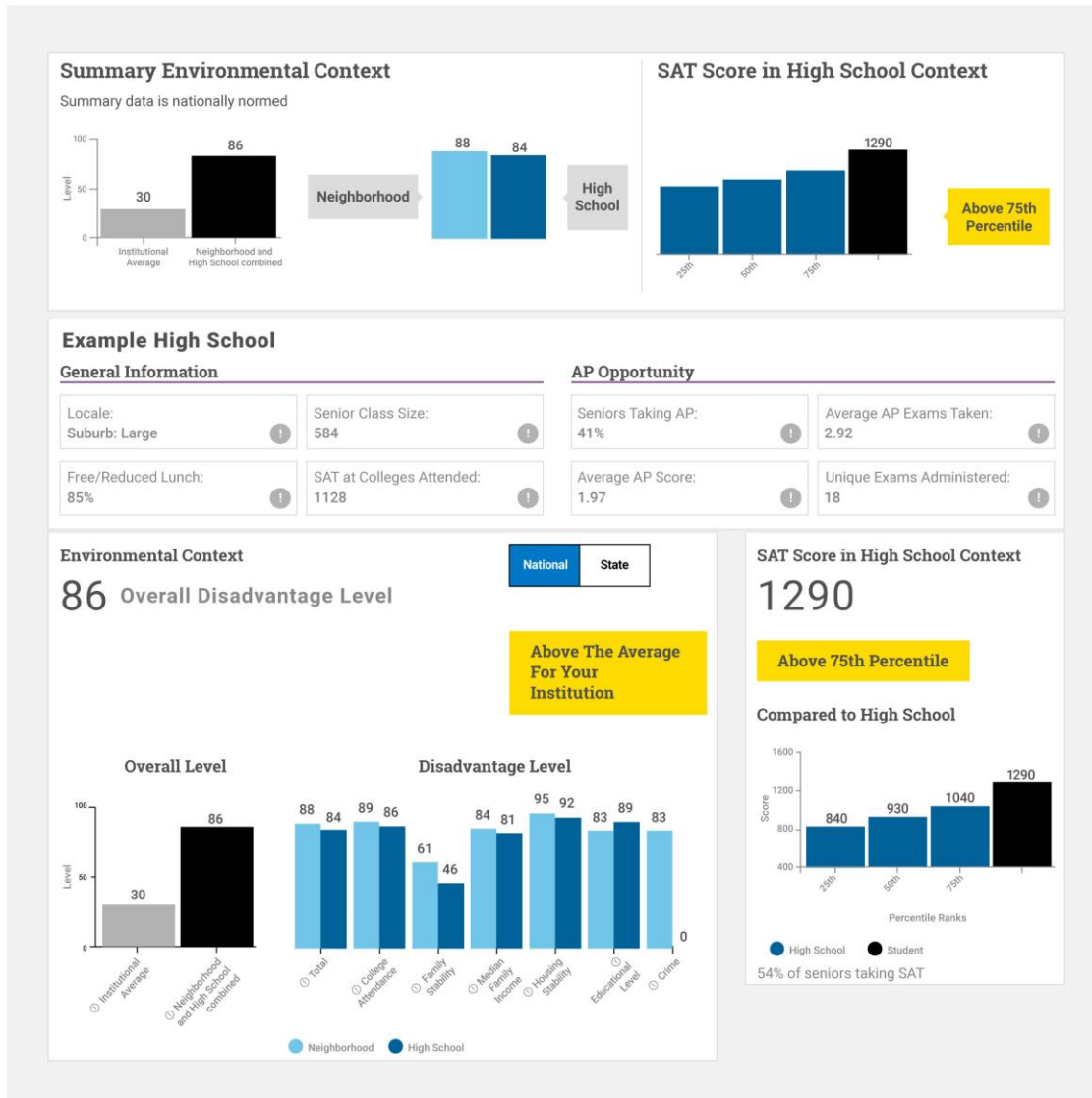
How is this a fair view of a student's disadvantage when it doesn't take personal experiences into account?

The Environmental Context Dashboard (ECD) is just one part of a college's holistic admissions process and does not include any information specific to the student other than their SAT score. There are other components of the college application where it is encouraged for students to share personal stories and experiences, such as in their personal essay. Students should reach

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out to the admissions office at the colleges where they apply to find the best place to share this type of information about themselves.

What does the dashboard look like?

Below is an example of what an admissions officer would see when they view the dashboard. Views vary depending on the institution.

For more information about the Environmental Context Dashboard, visit collegeboard.org/ecd.

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